

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the study

Learning English as a foreign language is not a new thing in Indonesia. English as an international language becomes the most significant way to communicate in this globalization era. Therefore, no wonder if English is taught as a compulsory subject in schools. English is not only taught to junior high school and senior high school students, but it is also to be taught to preschool students.

Introducing English in early age can make our children get use to with other languages besides their mother tongue; therefore they will have interest to study more about English (Finnochiaro, 1964:9). He also points out that childhood is the best period for acquiring a nature or near native pronunciation because the speech organs of the children are still flexible, which makes them easy to learn the sound system of foreign language. It can be concluded that it is better to teach the pronunciation of foreign language as early as possible to have a better result. There have been medical evidence and experiments showed that children learn the pronunciation of foreign language faster and accurately especially in their pronunciation rather than adolescents or adults.

The Indonesian curriculum includes English as the local content and introduces English from the earlier ages, so English can be learned as early as possible. Al Kufaishi (1988:42) explains that students' listening, comprehending,

writing, and reading abilities are hampered by their vocabulary. To clarify this statement, he continues saying that the possession of a large number of vocabularies is a vehicle for thoughts, self expression, interpretation, and communication. Many experts believe the sooner children who learn English will get better result. According to Kasbolah (1992:11-12), children possess unique capacities for language learning.

In learning a new language, vocabulary plays an important role because it carries contents to convey ideas or information. Regarding this issues, some researchers give emphasis on the importance of vocabulary. Richard (cited in Purba, 1990:22) says that vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of foreign language learners. Wallace (1982:9) even states that There is a sense in which learning a foreign language is basically a matter of learning the vocabulary. In supporting of this view, Harmer (1991:153) says that vocabulary provides the vital organs and the flesh, while the language structure makes up the language skeleton. Wallace (1982: 91) admits that although people have good knowledge of grammar, for example, they may not be able to communicate in English yet. In contrast, if they have the vocabulary they need, they can communicate.

In fact, the goal of vocabulary teaching in TEFL is the language teaching as a whole, i.e. the mastery of four basic skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Purba, 1990:23). For the first two skills, passive or receptive vocabulary is needed, while for the others two, active or productive vocabulary is required (Frisby, 1957:103). Imagine what people can get in reading or listening classes if the materials given are full of unknown words. They will find difficulties to

understand the text they read and the materials they listen to. Students will not succeed in speaking class also because of the lack of vocabulary. They will fail to express their thought or ideas and they become reluctant to communicate either indoor or outdoor class.

Helaly (1987: 37) states that, unlike adults, children are not self motivated and do not have an immediate need to learn English. They do not concerned with jobs or university degrees that require knowledge of English. Their world is their daily games, events of interest to them, new knowledge that they may come across, and question that their inquisitive minds may ask. The children communicate all their needs and experiences and receive new knowledge in their mother tongue. Therefore, the teacher of English as a foreign language has a challenging task of findings ways to motivate them.

Ornstein (1990; 515) explains that a good teacher no matter how experienced, is a critic of his or her own lesson and seeks new ways for improving the teaching-learning situation. The statements above can be completed by (Croft, 1986: 437) stated that teachers are welcome to use any technique they like but with one consideration that the materials and techniques have to be designed to build up the learner's skill in using his present small vocabulary resources and at the same time increase those resources.

Clark (1973:23) states that the role of teacher in learning foreign language is significant since she or he is the most influential person in the classroom who supports the success of teaching learning process. The teacher should make any effort to keep students' motivation at high level. Not only by

giving students a sense of security, success, and achievement, but also by varying the technique presentation and her or his instructional materials.

Related to the above discussion, many techniques have been developed to teach vocabularies as well as other subjects in English. Songs, games, pictures, and drama are the media that are normally used as alternative techniques to classical teaching. For instance, the use of pictures in teaching vocabulary is able to encourage students to study (Raimes, 1983). Stanulewics (1990) also states that pictures do not only encourage students to write but also erase students' boredom. The statements are some examples of experiencing the merits of using pictures in flashcards for teaching vocabulary. Considering the importance of a conducive learning environment and using flashcards in building it, it is necessary to study further usage of flashcards in teaching vocabulary to preschool students.

Studies show that the first year of child life is a very critical in the development of the young child, the correct stimulation at the right stage of development based on a long way to watch the positive and enhancement of the young child personality and attitude. Gym Kidz program offers the young children the right stimulation at the right stage through play. The Gym Kidz program have been developed by a dedicated specialist working full time with thousands of children in Asia since 1986.

Gym Kidz as one of the international preschools located at Ruko Plaza Graha Family Surabaya adopts flashcards as one of the techniques to teach English vocabulary. Gym Kidz also offer quality program that cater to the specific needs and aspiration of Asian children and parents' life like no other program

could although purpose full play. Considering that flashcards is a new technique introduced to teach English vocabulary at the preschool and the difficulty in get the literature about flashcards, the writer chooses the school to carry out this study with the aim to explore the use of flashcards to teach vocabulary.

The use of flashcards was used not only at the Gym Tots class, but also in the Tiny Tots class but for the Tiny Tots class, the use of flashcards only took a small part in the teaching learning process.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problems**

Based on the background of the study discussed previously, this study attempts to seek the possible answers to the following questions.

1. How are flashcards used to teach English vocabulary in relation to classroom atmosphere and teacher's role at Gym Kidz?
2. What are advantages and disadvantages of teaching English vocabulary using flash cards at Gym Kidz?

### **1.3. Objectives of The Study**

Relating to the statement of the problems, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify ways in which flashcards are used to teach English vocabulary in relation to classroom atmosphere and teacher's role to the students at Gym kidz.

2. To identify advantages and disadvantages of teaching English vocabulary using flashcards at Gym kidz.

#### **1.4. The Significance of the Study**

This study is aimed to find out the use of flashcards in English teaching vocabulary at Gym Kidz and to find out its advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, the study is expected to be able to contribute some insights to studies of teaching English as a foreign language, especially in vocabulary teaching. In addition, this study is directed primarily to teachers of preschool in order to give them an alternative way of teaching English vocabulary by using flashcards. Knowing the advantages and disadvantages of using flashcards, the writer hopes that this study can be useful to preschool teachers to develop their teaching techniques.

#### **1.5. Definition of the Key Terms**

The definition of the key terms in this study is proposed to give a clear understanding of the terms in order to avoid misinterpretation. The terms are:

- Vocabulary: a list of words, usually in alphabetical order and with explanations of their meaning less complete than a dictionary (Longman Dictionary of English and Culture, 1992:1467).

It means that students must get vocabulary as much as possible so that they will easily master vocabulary in order to use and understand simple ideas.

- **Technique:** implementation that actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective (Anthony, 1963: 145). It means that teacher should be able to manage the learning activity in such away as accommodate the students' need the goal of language learning.
- **Flashcards:** any of a set of cards with words, numbers, etc. on them, which are flashed one by one for quick response, as before a class in a drill (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 1998:). The card consists of two sides. The first side is letter and the other side represents picture and names from the first side.